

# Secondary Research

*No Child Left Behind* initiatives support the use of secondary research as well as primary research. In addition to Learning Ally's ongoing primary research studies, we use secondary sources to inform and shape our programs. The articles cited appear in well-respected journals and online sources that document the effectiveness of audiobooks for students with print disabilities.

## THE CHALLENGE

Citing studies by experts in the field, Lubliner (2004) concludes that proficient reading requires children to decode and comprehend simultaneously as they move through a text. In addition, children's capacity to hold information in memory is very limited and in the initial stages of reading, decoding requires nearly all of their cognitive resources. They are then unable to focus on comprehension. Struggling readers, who have failed to develop automatic, proficient skills continue to switch back and forth from decoding to comprehension. This process becomes increasingly difficult and ineffective as text demands accelerate and reading skills remain static. In other words, students cannot comprehend what they cannot read, and reading is a skill that takes time and effort.

Lubliner, Shira. [Help for Struggling Upper-Grade Elementary Readers](#). *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 57, 2004.

## THE SOLUTION

Learning Ally provides access to the content auditorily so that the learner can focus on the content and not the decoding.

// The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. //

Anderson, R., Hiebert, E., Scott, J., & Wilkinson, I. (1984). [Becoming a nation of readers](#). Champaign-Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading.

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## THE CHALLENGE

Archer, et al. (2003) have determined that a student's failure to develop the skills necessary to read text accurately has a negative impact on both their current and future reading skill development. The immediate effect is that the student will have limited or no comprehension of the content because he can not correctly decode the words; which is the first step in building reading comprehension. As the student progresses through school, the content becomes more complex and dense with more and more challenging terminology. If the student did not develop effective decoding skills, he will not be able to comprehend the content. This could lead to serious frustration and possible academic failure. The result is that students with reading challenges are:

- More likely to struggle in secondary coursework.
- More likely to drop out of school when given the first opportunity.
- Less able to obtain employment that supports themselves and their families as adults.
- More likely to have social/emotional challenges as adults.
- Less able to participate in post-high school education training programs at technical schools, community colleges, colleges and universities.

Archer, Anita L, Mary M. Gleason, Vicky L. Vachon. [Decoding and Fluency: Foundation Skills for Struggling Older Readers](#), *Learning Disability Quarterly*, Vol. 26, 2003.

## THE SOLUTION

Learning Ally's research indicates that audiobooks improve student decoding and fluency skills, thus leading to improved comprehension — addressing the challenges described above.

**Learning Ally**   
Making reading accessible for all™

## The Benefits of Audiobooks in Teaching A Research Brief

Research shows that **Learning Ally's** program helps students gain confidence, independence and success.

**Learning Ally**, formerly Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic®, is the nation's largest audio textbook library offering 75,000+ titles. We provide digitally recorded textbooks and other support materials to over tens of thousands of members who cannot effectively read standard print because of a visual impairment, learning disability or other physical disability.

To answer educators' questions about the results of our programs and to address the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, we commissioned scientifically based primary research and case studies, and probed secondary sources to evaluate student achievement.

This report summarizes several research initiatives and case studies, as well as secondary source findings to support the benefits of our organization.

LearningAlly.org  
800.221.4792



## 8 Benefits of Using Audiobooks

1. Using audiobooks to teach children in school gives them "variety."
2. There are specific audiobooks prepared with children in mind that are not only educational but very entertaining. These types of audiobooks make learning fun.
3. Using audiobooks to teach children in school can give teachers more time to prepare for the next lesson.
4. Children with reading challenges can follow the readings from audiobooks while looking at the printed material and increasing their learning skills.
5. Audiobooks are cost effective compared to other technologies.
6. Audiobooks of popular stories hold students' interest.
7. Some students prefer to "read" by listening.
8. Audiobooks help children decipher the proper pronunciation of certain words that they would have difficulty reading. By hearing the pronunciation and seeing it in print, they grasp it better.

Lilly, S. [8 Teaching Benefits of Audio Books](#). *EzineArticles*. <http://ezinearticles.com/?8-Teaching-Benefits-of-Audio-Books&id=384636>. December 12, 2006

# Primary Research

## Evaluating the Effectiveness of Learning Ally's Audiobooks on CD in Conjunction with RAVE-O, a Comprehensive Reading Intervention

Center for Reading and Language Research, Tufts University, 2004, 2005, 2006

**RESULTS:** Students demonstrated statistically significant increases in standard scores in the areas of listening comprehension, phonological analysis, and blending and reading comprehension.

### ANALYSIS OF READING SKILLS

Specific analysis according to severity of the reading problem and Learning Ally's intervention are as follows:

- Students listening to audio versions of the minute stories while reading the text showed significant gains in listening comprehension, blending sounds and reading comprehension.
- Students with severe reading impairments showed significant increases in phonetic skills and listening comprehension.
- Students in the accelerated listening groups demonstrated significant increases in phonological skills, listening and reading comprehension.
- Students identified as struggling readers showed significant gains in reading fluency and accuracy.

### RESEARCHER:

Maryanne Wolf, Ed.D., Director, Center for Reading and Language Research, Tufts University

// There's no better tool than audiobooks for special education — ESL, At-Risk, inclusion, remedial, Title I. Pronunciations, speech patterns, image correlation and content comprehension are greatly improved by hearing at the same time as seeing. Special needs students are excited to hear their first books — often understanding for the first time what a joy books can be. And using audiobooks as a classroom activity means remedial readers aren't singled out for special classes, but can stay and learn with others. Being 'included' can't help but build confidence and much-needed self-esteem. //

The Audio Bookshelf. *Learning with Audiobooks*. 1997. <https://www.audiobookshelf.com/teachwith.html>.

### THE STUDY AT A GLANCE:

A total of 85 students identified as struggling readers, ranging in grades 1-4 participated over the course of three summers. The treatment groups for the study are as follows:

- Students reading along and listening to audio versions of the minute stories for 10 minutes a day.
- Students reading along and listening to audio versions of the minute stories for 10 minutes a day, at an accelerated rate.
- Students **not** using audio input.

### SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

Researchers, concluded that: "Over the course of three summer studies, integrating Learning Ally's audiobooks on CD with the RAVE-O minute stories led to significant increases in students' phonetic skills, listening and reading comprehension and fluency. These results were especially encouraging as the intervention took place for such a short period of time (approx. 4 weeks)." (Wolf, 2006)

# Program Evaluation

## Implementing Learning Ally's Learning Program: Evaluating the Impact on Classroom Procedures

Center for Technology in Education (CTE) and Education Association, Inc. (EAI), Johns Hopkins University, 2006

**CASE STUDY:** Rural County in Maryland, Grades 2-8, Language Arts/English 2005-2006

**RESULTS:** Teachers and parents were surveyed and interviewed at the beginning and at the end of the evaluation. The results were:

### Teachers:

- The Learning Ally equipment is easy to use.
- The Learning Ally materials and equipment support instruction.
- There are no barriers or obstacles to equipment use (when equipment and implementation training is provided).
- Learning Ally promotes independence among students.
- The audiobooks were able to motivate and hold the attention of struggling readers that would simply "tune out" of lessons in the past.

### Parents:

- Parents were very satisfied that Learning Ally helped their children access text materials.
- Parents reported their children were satisfied with Learning Ally's audiobooks and playback equipment.
- Parents reported the following improvements in their child's reading skills:
  - Better understanding of what they were reading (**comprehension**).
  - Better understanding of the words they read (**decoding**).
  - Greater ease and smoother reading (**fluency**).

### RESEARCHERS:

Center for Technology in Education (CTE) and Education Association, Inc. (EAI), Johns Hopkins University



### THE STUDY AT A GLANCE:

- 15 students participated in a year-long study.
- Participating students had Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with reading goals.
- Participating students were identified as having strength in listening comprehension.
- CTE & Learning Ally provided structured professional development to teachers for integrating Learning Ally into the classroom.
- Results were measured by participant surveys, classroom observations, end-of-year focus groups, teacher implementation logs and student achievement data.

### SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

In their study summary, researchers reported the following teacher comments:

- "My student struggles with word recognition, so by hearing the stories, he was able to actively and successfully participate."
- "In order for my student to 'read' grade-level text, she needs to listen to the Learning Ally CDs. Her comprehension is very good; she just struggles with decoding."
- "I had a student who was failing the first quarter ... One accommodation was to use the Learning Ally machine before he took a summative response on the material. He went from failing every subject at the start of the year to passing every subject by the end of the school year (A,B, C grades in all subjects). He passed on his own."